

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7189

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 3 TEL AVIV 3906

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US, EG

SUBJECT: HARIF ARTICLE ON GOI VIEWS RE INTERIM AGREEMENT

1. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY TRANSLATION JUNE 20 OF ARTICLE BY MAARIV
POLITICAL COMMENTATOR JOSEPH HARIF ON ISRAELI CABINET VIEWS
TOWARD INTERIM GOE/GOI AGREEMENT.

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE CONCESSION WHICH YITZHAK RABIN MADE IN WASH-
INGTON: GIVING A TERRITORIAL STRIP TO EGYPT AT ABU RODEIS.
(HE AGREED TO THAT FOLLOWING HINTS BY FORD THAT EGYPT
HAS SOFTENED HER STAND CONCERNING THE DURATION
OF THE PARTIAL SETTLEMENT. /ON THE OTHER
HAND HE DID NOT CONCEDE THE POSITION ON THE EASTERN
SIDE OF THE PASSES./ RABIN HAS AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY
WITH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, BUT ALSO WITH HIS
COLLEAGUES IN THE CABINET. (COMMENTARY BY JOSEPH HARIF).

3. IT SEEMS THAT THE CABINET MEMBERS HAVE NEVER BEEN SO CURIOUS
TO KNOW WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS BROUGHT WITH HIM FROM HIS VISIT
TO THE U.S. AS THIS TIME, WHEN THEY GATHERED ON TUESDAY
FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY CABINET SESSION TO HEAR
RABIN'S REPORT ON HIS TALKS WITH PRESIDENT FORD AND THE HEADS OF
THE ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON. FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE UNTIL HIS
RETURN FROM THE U.S. RABIN DID NOT "LEAK" A WORD TO ANYONE
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SURPRISINGLY NOT EVEN TO FOREIGN MINISTER ALLON. ALLON HAD TO
BE SATISFIED WITH THE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE PRIME
MINISTER THAT, AS HE PUT IT, ONLY IF HE NEEDED ADVICE OR A
DECISION BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE COURSE OF THE VISIT HE WOULD

CONTACT HIM. APPARENTLY RABIN THOUGHT HE DID NOT NEED ANY ADVICE FROM HOME. ON HIS OWN ACCORD HE DECIDED THEN AND THERE TO OFFER A FURTHER CONCESSION TO EGYPT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE DECISION, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAD ADOPTED ON THE EVE OF RABIN'S DEPARTURE FOR THE U.S., "TO RE-EXAMINE ITS STAND PARALLEL TO ANY SUCH CHANGES AS WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE EGYPTIAN STAND". SO RABIN EXAMINED AND DECIDED WHAT HE DID, ON HIS OWN.

4. SECONDLY, THE OTHER REASON FOR THE GREAT CURIOSITY OF THE CABINET MEMBERS DERIVED, APPARENTLY, FROM THE REALIZATION THAT "THE PRIME MINISTER'S JOURNEY THIS TIME WAS FATEFUL (AS MINISTER SHEM-TOV SAID IN THE CABINET). THE MAN WHO WAS LEAST EXCITED OF ALL WAS LEAST EXCITED OF ALL WAS APPARENTLY THE PRIME MINISTER, AS IS REFLECTED BY THE FACT THAT, DESPITE CONCEALED THREATS AND NOT SO CONCEALED PRESSURES BY WASHINGTON HE REMAINED "ADAMANT" DURING HIS VISIT AND THEREAFTER.

5. WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ASKED AT THE CABINET SESSION WHAT HIS EVALUATION WAS CONCERNING THE CHANCES OF REACHING AN INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT NOW, IN THE LIGHT OF THE CLARIFICATIONS IN THE U.S., HE REPLIED: "LESS THAN 50 : 50". THERE WERE QUITE A NUMBER OF CABINET MEMBERS WHO WERE PROBABLY SURPRISED TO HEAR THAT. FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPORT IT EMERGED THAT PRESIDENT FORD IS DETERMINED "TO DO EVERYTHING" IN ORDER TO PREVENT A CONTINUATION OF THE STALEMATE IN THIS REGION: THIS MEANS THAT (WITHOUT THE PRESIDENT HAVING EXPLICITLY SAID SO) AS LONG AS NOTHING HAS "MOVED" AND NO SETTLEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED, ISRAEL WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTIES AS FAR AS AID IS CONCERNED; THE CRISIS IN U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS WOULD BE AGGRAVATED; WASHINGTON WON'T BE ABLE TO SIT IDLE AND WOULD BE FORCED TO TAKE A NEW INITIATIVE WHICH WOULD NOT EXACTLY BE TO ISRAEL'S LIKING; A U.S. PLAN FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WOULD BE PRESENTED. THIS IS THE WHIP WHICH IS BEING APPLIED ON ISRAEL AS LONG AS WASHINGTON WANTS TO MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT TROUBLE ISRAEL IS LIABLE TO LET HERSELF IN FOR IF SHE DOES NOT SHOW THE REQUIRED FLEXIBILITY; THE WORD "OVERALL" (SETTLEMENT) IS EQUIVALENT TO A RETURN TO THE 1967 BORDERS*
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6. NEVERTHELESS, RABIN DID NOT SHOW, AT THE SPECIAL CABINET SESSION, ANY SIGN OF WILLINGNESS TO ABANDON HIS POSITION, AS HE DESCRIBED IT JUST BEFORE HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON. MOREOVER, SOME OF THE MINISTERS GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT IF THE ISRAELI STAND - WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER REGARDS AS RATHER GENEROUS AS LONG AS THE SUBJECT ON THE AGENDA IS A LIMITED AGREEMENT AND NOT A BROAD AGREEMENT WITHIN

THE FRAMEWORK OF WHICH EGYPT HAS TO COMMIT HERSELF TO NON-BELLIGERENCY

IS NOT ACCEPTED, HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO BRING ABOUT A SEVERANCE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS A SECOND TIME*
ONE OF THE STRIKING THINGS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE, IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION IN JERUSALEM-WASHINGTON RELA-

TIONS WHICH PERHAPS HAD RELAXED BUT BY NO MEANS DISAPPEARED, WAS THAT RABIN SHOWED WILLINGNESS TO MAKE A FURTHER STEP TOWARDS THE U.S., RATHER THAN TOWARDS EGYPT, IN THE CLEAR REALIZATION THAT A CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. MUST BE AVOIDED; BUT ON THE OTHER HAND HE LEFT THE AMERICANS IN DOUBT AS TO THE FINAL LIMIT OF ISRAEL'S CONCESSIONS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE PRIME MINISTER CREATED A SITUATION IN WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION CANNOT ACCUSE HIM OF RIGIDITY AND OF PREVENTING ANY "MOVE", WITHOUT HIS HAVING CONCEDED, IN HIS EVALUATION, ANY BASIC REQUIREMENT ESPECIALLY AS FAR AS A FACTOR OF MILITARY-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IS CONCERNED.

7. WHEN RABIN HEARD FROM PRESIDENT FORD THAT HE COULD DISCERN A "MOVE" WITH THE EGYPTIANS AND THAT THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT CAIRO WOULD AGREE TO AN EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD OF TIME- A COMPONENT OF THE INTERIM SETTLEMENT TO WHICH ISRAEL ATTACHES SO MUCH IMPORTANCE - IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE COULD NOT GO ON "MARKING TIME". THE PRESIDENT SPOKE FROANKLY ABOUT HIS DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE STALEMATE WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED (NOW THE WORD IS STALEMATE, NOT THE FAILURE OF THE TALKS) AND ABOUT THE DANGERS IN THE NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT, NOT TO MENTION THE JOINT INTEREST WHICH ISRAEL AND THE U.S. OUGHT TO HAVE IN CREATING A REALITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT WOULD BE DISIRABLE FOR ISRAEL NO LESS THAN FOR THE U.S. - I.E. THE CURTAILMENT OF SOVIET INFLUENCE.

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8. AT THE SAME OCCASION, ALTHOUGH FORD COULD NOT SHOW THAT HE HAD SOMETHING CONCRETE IN HIS HAND WHICH HE HAD RECEIVED FROM EGYPT, THE PRIME MINISTER FOUND HIMSELF (HAVING CONSULTED HIS OWN WISDOM) OFFERING AN ISRAELI CONCESSION:"RESPONDING TO THE DEMAND TO PROVIDE EGYPT WITH TERRITORIAL CONTINUITY" TO ABU RODEIS. BUT IN THEFRAMEWORK OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IN MARCH, ISRAEL HAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US, EG

SUBJECT: HARIF ARTICLE ON GOI VIEWS RE INTERIM AGREEMENT

AGREED THAT THE OIL FIELDS OF ABU RODEIS AND SURROUNDINGS WOULD BE HANDED OVER TO EGYPTIAN CIVILIAN RULE. ACCORDING TO THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL, IT WAS AN ENCLAVE THE APPROACH TO WHICH WAS FROM THE SEA. THIS TIME THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED TO PUT ON THE TABLE THE FIRST CONCESSION, AND AGREED TO THE IDEA OF TERRITORIAL CONTINUITY FROM LAND AS WELL (IN PRINCIPLE, TECHNICALLY, THE AREA WOULD HAVE TO BE DETERMINED, BECAUSE NOT FAR AWAY IS AN ISRAELI ROAD, LEADING TO EL TUR APPROACHING SHARM ES SHEIKH), BUT REFUSED TO AGREE TO A COMPLETE CONCESSION OF THE PASSES. HE INSISTED THAT THE EASTERN PART OF THE PASSES REMAIN IN ISRAELI HANDS. FOR THE SAKE OF ACCURACY, EVEN THE ADDITIONAL CONCESSION AT ABU RODEIS IS CONTINGENT UPON EGYPT'S AGREEMENT TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT UP TO 3 - 5 YEARS.

9. WHY DID THE PRIME MINISTER SEE FIT TO MAKE THE CONCESSION, WHEN IT WAS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER A PARALLEL CONCESSION, CONCERNING THE PERIOD OF TIME, WAS TO BE REGARDED AS FACT? HE COULD HAVE WAITED AND SEEN WHAT EGYPT WOULD PROPOSE AND ONLY AFTERWARDS HE COULD HAVE ANNOUNCED THE ISRAELI CONCESSION. ADMITTEDLY, FOR THE TIME BEING IT IS NOT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR WHAT EGYPT'S STAND IS, UNCLASSIFIED

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BUT IS IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT IF THE U.S. PRESIDENT, WHO PERSONALLY TALKED WITH SADAT ABOUT THE COMPONENTS OF THE SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL SAYS THAT HE ASSUMED THAT THERE IS A CHANCE THAT EGYPT WILL SOFTEN ON THE QUESTION OF THE TIME PERIOD OF THE AGREEMENT, THIS IS APPARENTLY MORE THAN A MERE ASSUMPTION. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO CERTAINTY THAT EGYPT WILL AGREE TO A DIRECT COMMITMENT TOWARDS ISRAEL, AND IT IS BECOMING CLEAR THAT FORD AND KISSINGER HAVE ALREADY TRIED TO PREPARE RABIN "PSYCHOLOGICALLY" FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT WOULD BE GIVEN TO THE U.S., AND THE U.S. WOULD COMMIT HERSELF TOWARDS ISRAEL (IN MARCH EGYPT WAS NOT PREPARED TO AGREE TO SUCH A PROPOSAL, AS ISRAEL DEMANDED). HOWEVER, EVEN THE INDIRECT COMMITMENT FOR A PERIOD OF 3 YEARS WAS ONLY DISCUSSED IN PRINCIPLE.

10. NOW IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER EGYPT WILL AGREE TO IT AND WHAT PRICE SHE WILL DEMAND FOR THAT "CONCESSION". IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSUME THAT EGYPT WILL EASILY ABANDON HER DEMAND THAT ISRAEL CONCEDE THE ENTIRE PASSES. THIS IS PERHAPS THE REASON WHY THE PRIME MINISTER HAS PREPARED THE MINISTERS FOR A SITUATION IN WHICH THE CHANCES OF REACHING A SETTLEMENT ARE LESS THAN 50PERCENT, BECAUSE RABIN ON HIS PART HAS NOT, SO FAR, SHOWN ANY SIGN OF WILLINGNESS TO ABANDON THE ENTIRE PASSES.

ONE OF HIS REASONS, PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE, IS THAT, EVEN IF EGYPT SHOULD COMMIT HERSELF NOT TO INTERVENE IN CASE NO AGREEMENT IS REACHED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SYRIA, IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT EGYPT WOULD INDEED STAND IDLY BY IN THE EVENT OF A RESUMPTION OF WAR IN THE NORTH. AND SINCE EGYPT IS NOT PREPARED TO COMMIT HERSELF TO NON-BELLIGERENCY, ONLY TO THE "NON-USE OF FORCE", RABIN IS NOT PREPARED TO RELY ON EGYPT'S FAIRNESS AND HONESTY, BUT WANTS TO GO ON HOLDING ON TO THE EASTERN PART OF THE PASSES, WHICH IS, IN RABIN'S EVALUATION, OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE.

11. MINISTER GAD YAACOBİ STRENGTHENED THIS ARGUMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER WITH AN ADDITIONAL MOTIVATION: THE VERY FACT OF EGYPT'S INSISTENCE ON THE EVACUATION OF THE ENTIRE PASSES AROUSES SEVERE SUSPICIONS THAT EGYPT DOES NOT REALLY HAVE AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT MEANT TO PAVE THE WAY TOWARDS PEACE IN MIND, BUT WANTS TO STRENGTHEN HER MILITARY OPTION IN TRYING TO BRING ABOUT ISRAEL'S TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. FROM THIS VIEWPOINT MINISTER SHLOMO HILLEL WAS EVEN MORE EXTREME. HE THINKS THAT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A LIMITED AGREEMENT ISRAEL NEED NOT GIVE UP THE PASSES AT ALL (AND THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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WAS INDEED THE ORIGINAL STAND OF THE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING TEAM AND THE GOVERNMENT).

12. ANOTHER REASON FOR RABIN'S WILLINGNESS TO OFFER ALREADY AT THIS STAGE THE CONCESSION OF ABU RODEIS - ADMITTEDLY "ON CONDITION" - LIES IN THE TENDENCY TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR ISRAEL'S FRIENDS TO CONTINUE TO STAND BY HER SIDE. THE ADMINISTRATION'S "REASSESSMENT" WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO EXERT A SERIES OF PRESSURES ON ISRAEL, HAD NOT BORNE THE EXPECTED FRUIT. ISRAEL'S REPLY HAD BEEN: "THE SENATORS' LETTER". THE ADMINISTRATION DID NOT CONCEAL ITS DISMAY AT THIS INITIATIVE ON THE PART OF ISRAEL, WHICH, NO DOUBT, MADE THINGS MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE ADMINISTRATION. BUT PRECISELY FOR THAT REASON IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE THE "SENATORS' LETTER" AS AN "ASSET" AND NOT TO LET IT GO UP IN SMOKE. INTER ALIA, IT SAYS IN THAT LETTER, SIGNED BY 76 OUT OF 99 SENATORS, THAT "THE HISTORY OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT PROVES THAT EVERY ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL HAS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY MEANINGFUL STEPS TOWARDS PEACE ON THE PART OF HER ARAB NEIGHBORS". IF FORD COULD HAVE INDICATED THAT EGYPT IS PREPARED TO MAKE "A MEANINGFUL STEP" - LIKE AGREEING TO AN EXTENSION OF THE DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT - THIS WOULD HAVE PLACED ISRAEL IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT MANY OF THE SIGNATORIES OF THE LETTER WOULD HAVE ARGUED WITH ISRAEL THAT UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE SOME KIND OF CONCESSION WOULD PREVENT AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT, PRECISELY AT A TIME WHEN EGYPT SHOWS A MARKED DESIRE TO EFFECT A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE U.S.*

13. THUS, RABIN HAS MADE A CALCULATED MOVE. HE MADE A CONCESSION WHICH DOES NOT CAUSE GRAVE HARM FROM THE MILITARY POINT OF VIEW AND HAS THUS PUT THE U.S. AS WELL AS EGYPT TO THE TEST. EGYPT

WILL HAVE TO PROVE WHETHER SHE INDEED MEANS TO MAKE A CONCRETE
CONCESSION REGARDING THE DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT)
FOR THE SAKE OF REACHING AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT; THE U.S.
WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CLAIM THAT ISRAEL IS INTRANSIGENT, AND THE
U.S. WILL HAVE TO PROVE WHETHER SHE IS ABLE TO INFLUENCE ISRAEL
ALONE BY MEANS OF HER "REASSESSMENT", INCLUDING THE ONE IN THE
SPHERE OF HARDWARE AND ECONOMIC AID.
NOW THE U.S. HAS TO TRANSFER THE BALL INTO THE EGYPTIAN FIELD,
WITHOUT HAVING GIVEN IN TO ISRAEL IN THE MATTER OF THE PASSES.
EVEN IF EGYPT SHOULD AGREE, EVENTUALLY, TO EXTEND THE DURATION OF
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THE AGREEMENT - BY MEANS OF AN INDIRECT COMMITMENT - SHE WILL
MOST LIKELY NOT DO SO WITHOUT TRYING TO EXTORT FROM ISRAEL SOME
MORE CONCESSIONS.

14. THE QUESTION ARISES WHETHER THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT WILL STAND
THE TEST THAT IS AHEAD IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. IF WE ARE TO JUDGE BY
SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN THE CABINET, IT SEEMS THAT THE MATTER
LARGELY DEPENDS ON ONE MAN- YITZHAK RABIN - WHO, TO THE AMAZEMENT
OF THE DOVES IN THE GOVERNMENT, SHOWS A STRONG AND FIRM STAND.
THAT'S WHAT IT WAS BEFORE HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON- AND THAT'S WHAT
IT SEEMS TO BE AFTER HE HAS COME BACK FROM THE U.S.*

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SUBJECT: HARIF ARTICLE ON GOI VIEWS RE INTERIM AGREEMENT

15. THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO AUTHORIZE THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE DEFENSE MINISTER TO SERVE AS ITS NEGO-
TIATING TEAM. THERE WERE THOSE WHO CLAIMED THAT THE CONDUCT OF

NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT, THROUGH THE U.S., SHOULD NOT BE ENTRUSTED TO THAT TEAM EXCLUSIVELY. THE ILP MINISTERS- AND THEY WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES - (AHARON YADLIN AS WELL) - WANTED THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT "TO BE IN THE PICTURE" THROUGHOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS. MOST LIKELY, THE ILP MINISTERS WANTED TO PREVENT A SITUATION IN WHICH THE "HAWKISH" PART OF THE TEAM SHOULD MAKE ITS IMPRINT ON THE NEGOTIATIONS. BUT THEIR PROPOSAL WAS REJECTED. NEVERTHELESS, THE STAND WAS ADOPTED THAT THE NEGOTIATING TEAM WAS AUTHORIZED TO CONDUCT THE TALKS, AND TO CONCLUDE THEM - WITH GOVERNMENT APPROVAL - POSITIVELY. THAT IS TO SAY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF A POSITIVE CONCLUSION THE TEAM GOT "CARTE BLANCHE", BUT IF FOR SOME REASON THE TEAM SHOULD REACH THE CONCLUSION THAT THE TALKS CANNOT BE CONCLUDED POSITIVELY, THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE TO BE BROKEN OFF - IT IS NOT ENTITLED TO DO SO ON ITS OWN ACCORD AND IS OBLIGATED TO BRING THE MATTER BEFORE THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT FOR A DECISION.

16. THE SPECIAL CABINET SESSION THIS WEEK STRENGTHENED THE IMPRESSION THAT RABIN CAN EXPECT AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY WITH THE UNCLASSIFIED

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WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION, BUT ALSO WITH HIS OWN GOVERNMENT IN JERUSALEM. THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT A PARTIAL AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT HAS TO BE REACHED BECAUSE OTHERWISE WE SHALL GET INTO A CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S.- PRACTICALLY SAY THAT IN THE END WE SHALL HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO GIVE UP THE ENTIRE PASSES. THIS CLAIM WAS VOICED BY QUITE A FEW IN THE COURSE OF THE POLITICAL DEBATE. IN THIS RESPECT ONE HAS TO BE ABLE TO "READ BETWEEN THE LINES" IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THAT RABIN'S ARGUMENT WILL PERHAPS BE NOT ONLY WITH "REGULAR" MINISTER. WE SHOULDN'T BE AT ALL SURPRISED IF THAT ARGUMENT WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE NEGOTIATING TEAM ITSELF. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, FOR INSTANCE, TALKED IN THE CABINET ABOUT THE NEED "FOR VERY HARD BARGAINING" AND THE NEED "TO EXPLORE THE NEGOTIATIONS EXHAUSTIVELY AND REACH A SETTLEMENT". A CLOSE LOOK AT THAT FORMULATION WILL MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE EMPHASIS IS ON "ONE HAS TO REACH A SETTLEMENT"; THIS MEANS THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER, TOO, TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE CONCESSION OF ALL THE PASSES ENTIRELY.

17. IT SEEMS THAT ON THIS QUESTION ONE CAN ALSO DISCERN A TUNE IN "MINOR KEY" COMING FROM DEFENSE MINISTER PERES. OUTSIDE THE CABINET PERES SAID THAT HE IS AGAINST AN ABSOLUTE CONCESSION OF THE PASSES (HE TOO MEANT THE EASTERN PART). IN THE POLITICAL DEBATE, THIS WEEK, WITHIN THE CABINET, HE DID NOT EXPRESS HIS OPINION ON THAT SUBJECT AT ALL. HE ANALYZIED WHY IT WAS IMPORTANT TO REACH AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT. HE EXPLAINED THAT IN HIS OPINION "THE ARAB PROBLEM IS TODAY IN WASHINGTON, AND IT IS WITH THE AMERICANS THAT WE HAVE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT." HE EXPLAINED THAT SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING HAS TO CONCENTRATE ON THE QUESTION OF THE DURATION OF THE SETTLEMENT ("SO THAT THEY SHOULDN'T COME TO US EVERY THREE MONTHS AND TALK TO US ABOUT THE NECESSITY TO MAKE A "MOVE" ...). HE ARGUED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO

CLARIFY IN ADVANCE THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AS FAR AS SYRIA IS CONCERNED, AND TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WASHINGTON MEANS WHEN IT SAYS THERE IS A NEED TO MAKE A "MOVE" IN THE SYRIAN SECTOR AS WELL. IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO THE AMERICANS THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT ALL THESE THINGS SHOULD BE CLARIFIED BEFORE ONE GETS INTO THE PRACTICAL STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. "OTHERWISE" - PERES SAID - "WE SHALL HAVE TO EXPECT A 'REASSESSMENT' EVERY THREE MONTHS." "IF NO UNDERSTANDING WITH THE U.S. IS REACHED" PERES THINKS, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE PRESENT 'REASSESSMENT'?"...

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18. HOWEVER, PERES SPOKE IN GENERALIZATIONS. HE DID NOT GO INTO DETAILS. AMONG THE DETAILS HE DID NOT GO INTO WERE THE PASSE. THE MINISTERS PAID ATTENTION TO THAT FACT, PRECISELY BECAUSE OTHERS SPOKE ABOUT IT CLEARLY: THE PRIME MINISTER, SHLOMO HILLEL, AND GAD YAACOB. AND ISRAEL GALILI, WHO SPOKE IN HIS OWN WAY OF "DROPPING HINTS". HE WANTED TO REMIND THE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET THAT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED THAT, WITHOUT AN EGYPTIAN MOVE, THERE WAS NO NEED FOR AN ISRAELI MOVE; AND ONE MAY ASSUME THAT IN THIS WAY HE MEANT TO SUPPORT THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO STATED THAT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE KIND OF AGREEMENT WHICH THE EGYPTIANS - AND THE AMERICANS - HAD IN MIND, THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR GIVING UP THE PASSES ENTIRELY. ONE OF THE MINISTERS REMARKED THAT "APPARENTLY PERES DID NOT WANT TO DIG IN BEHIND A RIGID POSITION". POSSIBLY. BUT IT IS A FACT THAT AT THIS STAGE THERE IS NO KNOWING WHETHER THERE WILL BE UNANIMITY OF VIEWS WITHIN THE NEGOTIATING TEAM AS FAR AS THE FINAL "LIMIT OF CONCESSIONS" IS CONCERNED, EVEN AT THE PRICE OF A POSSIBLE CONFRONTATION WITH WASHINGTON. IF WE ARE TO GO BY THE WAY THE LAST DEBATE WENT - AND BY THE IMPRESSION THE CABINET MINISTERS GOT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S STAND - RABIN IS REGARDED BY THEM AS "SUSPECT", THEY BELIEVE HE IS CAPABLE OF BEING RIGID ONCE MORE.

19. THERE IS ALMOST NO DOUBT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S "HARD LINE" HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY INTERNAL FACTORS. IT IS A FACT THAT THE SHADOW OF MOSHE DAYAN WAS "HOVERING" OVER THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI TEAM IN MARCH. MOSHE DAYAN HAS NOT CHANGED HIS MIND. MOREOVER, ONE MAY ASSUME THAT EVEN IF THE NEGOTIATING TEAM DECIDED TO REACH A SETTLEMENT, WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE AN EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT TO "NON-BELLIGERENCY", AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NEVERTHELESS GIVE UP THE PASSES ENTIRELY - DAYAN WOULD COME OUT AGAINST SUCH A SETTLEMENT IN THE KNESSET, TOO. THAT IS TO SAY, IF IN THE KNESSET A BROAD FRONT WERE TO ARISE THAT WOULD INCLUDE THE WHOLE OF LIKUD AS WELL AS KNESSET MEMBERS OF OTHER FACTIONS, DAYAN WOULD EVEN VOTE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, WITH ALL THE CONSEQUENCES THIS WOULD HAVE. (THE QUESTION IS, WHAT WILL THE LIBERALS DO PART OF WHOM ARE IN FAVOR OF A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT). DAYAN THINKS THAT NOW IS THE TIME TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT, THAT WOULD PUT AN END TO THE STATE OF WAR, AND WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUCH A SETTLEMENT IT WOULD BE FITTING TO GIVE UP THE PASSES AND

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OTHER AREAS IN SINAI. ANY OTHER SETTLEMENT WOULD NOT GET US ANY NEARER TO PEACE. PARALLEL TO THAT - DAYAN THINKS - WE HAVE TO REACH A SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIA, EVEN AT THE PRICE OF SERIOUS CONCESSIONS, BUT THERE AGAIN, NOT ON A 'NARROW BASIS', WHICH WOULD OF NECESSITY BE BAD.

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